

## Supporting San Miguel County's economy one student at a time

October 1, 2015



A new partnership between Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico Highlands University's Achieving in Research, Math and Science (ARMAS) Center and the Las Vegas/San Miguel Entrepreneurial Network not only deepens the relationships between the Laboratory and San Miguel County's higher education leaders and business owners, but it also includes a pilot internship program for Highland University's students.

"The mission of Highlands' ARMAS Center is to provide comprehensive support to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) students and faculty," said ARMAS Director Edward Martinez. "The connection to Los Alamos allows us to also offer meaningful work experiences to more students and for a greater variety of skills."

During the summer 2015 internship pilot, seven Highlands students were placed with four San Miguel County businesses.

“The small businesses were asked to mentor and assist students in increasing their job-related proficiencies, while the ARMAS Center offered guidance for both the students and mentors,” Martinez explained. “An investment from Los Alamos National Security, LLC supports the students’ salaries, creating a win-win for our region.”

## Hands-on experience

Monique Martinez, a first-year Highlands student who plans to later attend medical school and become a pediatrician, feels that she learned a lot during her internship, and so do Diego Trujillo, a biomedical engineering major also headed for med school, and Elizabeth Estrada, a pre-pharmacy senior.

Martinez selected the Balanced Health Acupuncture Center in Las Vegas for her internship so she could learn about traditional Chinese forms of medicine.

“Working alongside Dr. Bernadette Lujan, I have been inspired more than ever to pursue a career in the medical field,” Martinez said. “I was nervous going into the internship, but I have acquired new skills and new friends for whom I am very grateful. It is definitely an experience I won’t forget!”

Given his engineering interest, Trujillo chose to work for Energy Concepts, an electrical contracting company that specializes in energy efficiency and solar and wind energy installations.

“Working for Energy Concepts was by far the best job experience I’ve had,” Trujillo said. “I learned things I would never even have thought of.”

Elizabeth Estrada decided to work for Las Vegas’ Semilla Natural Foods store, because she was interested in learning about herbal remedies.

“I want to be a pharmacist some day,” Estrada said, “and understanding herbs and their healing properties can be helpful if someone can’t take their medications. My grandma often used herbal products when I was sick.”

Understanding the interactions between herbal remedies and modern pharmaceuticals is important to Estrada as well.

“I became familiar with some of the more common herbs while I worked for Semilla Natural Foods,” Estrada explained. “I learned their uses and what they look like. I even learned some of the chemicals that give them their healing properties. Semilla was the best internship I have had so far.”

All three interns are grateful for their summer work experiences and for the ARMAS Center in general.

“I owe a large portion of my success to the ARMAS program, both in the classroom and the field,” Diego Trujillo said. “My experiences have been invaluable.”

*To learn more about Highlands University’s Achieving in Research, Math and Science program, visit the [ARMAS](#) website. For further details about ARMAS’ pilot internship initiative, contact internship coordinator Monique Esquibel ([mesquibel@nmhu.edu](mailto:mesquibel@nmhu.edu)).*

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*Community Connections* features news and opportunities that grow out of the Laboratory’s Good Neighbor Pledge: “To partner with our neighbors on strengthening math and science learning, diversifying the economy and expanding community giving in northern New Mexico.”

**Los Alamos National Laboratory**

**[www.lanl.gov](http://www.lanl.gov)**

**(505) 667-7000**

**Los Alamos, NM**

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